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RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0193

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VIENNA 000832

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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA ON THE MARCH 30-31 FOREIGN MINISTERS  
MEETING (GYMNICH)

REF: STATE 37792

Classified By: Economic-Political Counselor Gregory E. Phillips

11. (SBU) EconPolCouns delivered reftel points on March 29 to Anreas Riecken, the Austrian MFA's European Correspondent. Riecken responded substantively as follows.

12. (C) Western Balkans: The discussion will focus on Kosovo, Riecken said. It is very clear that the EU supports Martti Ahtisaari's efforts. What the EU needs to decide, Riecken said, is how to proceed in a united way. In order to achieve a Russian abstention in the UN Security Council, Riecken reasoned, the text on Kosovo will probably have to be rather weak and vague, serving as a basis for Kosovo to declare independence. In that case, it will be crucial for the EU to act in a united way to recognize Kosovo. This would not be easy, he said: important voices in Slovakia, Hungary and Romania opposed this result. The Rule of Law mission was an important step, he added. An EU preparatory team is currently in Kosovo to assess the situation. The mission would be the largest civil ESDP mission ever, with some 1,400 police and judges. Austria would participate, folding its current police trainers in UNMIK over to the ESDP mission, and identifying judges to serve.

13. (C) Middle East: Israeli-Palestinian Issues: Ministers will discuss the issue of how to deal with the Palestinian National Unity Government (NUG), Riecken said. Austria supports giving the NUG "a chance," and maintaining contacts with non-Hamas members of the government. (Note: In that connection, MFA Middle East and Africa Director Ralph Scheide told us on March 29 that NUG Foreign Minister Abu Amr would visit Vienna for meetings on April 4. Scheide said Austrian FM Ursula Plassnik had met with Abu Amr in December, and had found him a reasonable figure -- and one who enjoys the complete support of President Abu Mazen. Scheide shared with us (please protect) the key text of a letter Abu Amr sent to Plassnik accepting her invitation to visit Vienna. The letter, dated March 22, says, in part, "The new government has expressed its commitment to honor the agreements which the Palestine Liberation Organization signed with Israel. After your statements of encouragement and support, the government feels additionally obliged to synchronize its positions and conduct on the ground with the wishes, demands and resolutions of the international community. The government will also exert its utmost effort to ensure the safe release of the Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, in the context of an honorable and fair prisoner exchange arrangement. The new government has committed itself to work hard towards consolidating the current truce with Israel and towards expanding this truce to become comprehensive and

reciprocal. I would like to assure you that I, personally, will exert maximum effort to achieve these goals." Scheide noted that the NUG had not yet fulfilled the three principles (renunciation of violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of Quartet agreements), but he said the Austrians believed Abu Amr was a figure who could move the NUG toward doing so. End note.)

14. (C) European Neighborhood Policy: Riecken said there was a particular interest in developing cooperation among the states bordering the Black Sea and the Danube basin. This offered a unique forum in which to involve EU countries, Russia, Turkey and the Caucasus in common activity, he said.

15. (C) Zimbabwe: This was not among the topics listed in the Presidency's letter of invitation to the Gymnich meeting, Riecken noted. However, many expected British Foreign Secretary Beckett to raise Zimbabwe under "any other

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business." In any event, there would probably not be enough time to engage in a thorough discussion of the issue, he added.

16. (C) Missile Defense: Riecken said it was his understanding that FM Plassnik "has no intention" of raising Missile Defense (MD) at the Gymnich. He added that he thought reports of her intervention at the recent GAERC lunch were overblown. Plassnik did not, in fact, express opposition to MD plans, he asserted. Instead, she noted that her ministry had received public expressions of concern, and she asked for further information. She also said that MD was not an EU issue, but was a bilateral matter between the U.S. and participating countries. Riecken said the Czech Republic and Poland agreed to provide such information.

VIENNA 00000832 002 OF 002

17. (C) Darfur, Congo: Riecken reported "rumors" that the UK would raise Darfur under "any other business." Likewise, he said he had heard that Belgium wanted to raise the recent riots in the Democratic Republic of the Congo under that heading.  
Kilner